



# ACTESA Newsletter

Special edition: ACTESA's mission to the USA

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#04

## *ACTESA CEO discusses agricultural productivity investments with US partners*

Alliance for Commodity Trade Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) CEO, Cris Muyunda, has concluded a visit to the United States State of Iowa, one of the biggest agricultural producers in the World.

Dr. Muyunda, visited the Seed Science Centre at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, and presented a paper on the status of seed trade in Eastern and Southern Africa at the "Food, Feed and Fuel for the World: Seed and Biotechnology" Conference held by the Biosafety Institute for Genetically Modified Agricultural Products (BIGMAP) of Iowa State University.

Dr. Muyunda also held high level discussions with the Vice President of the US's premier seed company, Pioneer Hi-Bred, at the Pioneer Headquarters in Johnston, Iowa.

The BIGMAP Conference held 28-29 April, 2010, was attended by global authorities in agricultural policy and productivity improvement including AGRA, USDA, US State Department, American Seed Trade Association, USAID, the Genetic Approval Committee of India and the Inter American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture.

Others were the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the African Seed Trade Association and the French Professional Association for Seeds and Seedlings.

The BIGMAP Conference provided a good forum to discuss policy and regulatory issues around genetically modified agricultural products.

At the Pioneer Hi-Bred campus, Dr Muyunda had the opportunity to be briefed on the innovations in improved seed breeding and production. Specifically, Pioneer highlighted its Improved Maize for African Soils (IMAS) project under which a maize variety that can take up and use nitrogen from depleted soils more efficiently requiring less fertilizer use is being developed.

The IMAS project involves several partners in Eastern and Southern Africa including the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI).

Dr. Muyunda requested US partners to work with stakeholders in Eastern in Southern Africa to build a viable seed industry that will reach large numbers of smallholders in order to raise agricultural productivity, boost regional trade and increase rural incomes.

Following his visit in Iowa, Dr. Muyunda proceeded to Washington DC for discussions with ACTESA public and private partners.

## *ACTESA CEO meets with USDA*

ACTESA CEO, Cris Muyunda on April 30, met with the Coordinator of the US Global Food Security Initiative in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Ann Tutwiler and other USDA officials.

Dr. Muyunda was accompanied by ACTESA biotechnology advisor Getachew Belay, ACTESA media relations manager, Carol Jilombo and COMESA USAID programme coordinator Walter Talma.

The meeting discussed ACTESA's role in the Global Food Security Initiative which is part of the global program to be launched on May 20.

The initiative, dubbed "Feed the Future," will benefit 20 countries globally, of which six are from the COMESA region namely, Zambia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi, Kenya and Rwanda.

Ms Tutwiler said the initiative would be used as a tool to implement the investment priorities highlighted by countries in their investment plans and would help those that were not so advanced in their investment plans.

She said the Global Food Security Initiative would focus on enhancing regional integration, trade in grain staples, horticultural products and harmonization of trade regulations. Another important issue to be highlighted in the initiative will be nutrition and social safety nets.

Dr. Muyunda informed the meeting that ACTESA's role in the initiative would be to implement agreed regional markets and food security initiatives.

Further he highlighted that donor coordination is one of ACTESA's major roles and ACTESA's stakeholder meetings twice a year will be the main platforms to get all the donors together to share their views on agricultural development.

The meeting also agreed that private sector investment is key to raising agricultural productivity and ACTESA would use its unique position as a Specialized Agency of COMESA to continue to mobilize the private sector.

During the meeting, the importance of biotechnology as a tool to enhance, agricultural productivity and competitiveness was emphasized.

Dr. Muyunda said ACTESA would seek to expand the biotechnology programme in the FTF initiative.

## *ACTESA's meeting with USTR*

On April 30, 2010, the ACTESA team met with Bill Jackson, Director of African Affairs in the office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

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### *ACTESA's meeting with USTR (Contd)*

During the meeting, Dr. Muyunda briefed the participants that ACTESA is combining food security with market linkages and he emphasized the importance of enhancing agricultural value chains.

He informed the meeting that ACTESA views biotechnology as one of the most important tools that farmers can use to vigorously enhance their productivity levels.

He also told the meeting that ACTESA would participate in the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) activities and would establish an AGOA desk at the ACTESA Secretariat.

Updates regarding various areas of collaboration in the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) were shared and the parties agreed to review the status in the near future

### *ACTESA's meeting with IFPRI*

The ACTESA team met with Judith Chambers, Director on the Programme for Biosafety Systems (PBS) at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

Dr. Chambers commended ACTESA on its progress and particularly on its biotechnology programme.

She said PBS could provide its services to ACTESA as they had focal point people on the ground in most countries embarking in biotechnology as a tool to enhance agricultural productivity.

She said PBS was looking to work in four regional Economic Communities on harmonization of regulations and standards for instance, SPS regulations.

Dr. Chambers proposed to partner with the Biotech programme in COMESA/ACTESA to showcase it as a success story to the other RECs.

She stressed the importance of tackling perception issues associated with the use of biotech in agriculture. She also emphasized on the importance of collaborating with the private sector.

Dr. Chambers pledged to support ACTESA in its biotechnology work and commended the team for its excellent progress.

Dr. Muyunda thanked Dr. Chambers for her support and encouragement and accepted her proposal to showcase the COMESA/ACTESA biotech programme as a success story in Africa.

He said communication was vital on biotech issues especially to countries that have not started the process of putting a biosafety bill in place.

### *ACTESA meeting with USAID*

On May 3, 2010, the ACTESA team met with USAID trade and private sector advisor Jacklyn Claxton. The meeting discussed the importance of private sector participation in the agricultural agenda.

Dr. Muyunda asked for enhanced collaboration to consolidate the private sector as a way to enhance market linkages in the COMESA region.

He noted that ACTESA was already consulting with private companies, particularly the seed companies to collaborate with on the emerging seed sector in the region.

He further mentioned that ACTESA was looking at organic certification, developing market institutions, e.g development of commodity exchanges and capacity building of producers and traders.

Dr. Muyunda also said ACTESA was consulting Iowa State University to help in finalising seed harmonization standards.

Ms. Claxton thanked ACTESA for the meeting and commended the Agency on its work. She assured ACTESA she would touch base with them on the various issues discussed.

### *ACTESA presents at the Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty*

On May 3, 2010, ACTESA made a presentation on its work and progress to various stakeholders in Washington organized by the Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty.

Participants at the presentation included representatives from the USDA, US Treasury, Washington based universities, private sector and NGO's involved in food security.

ACTESA CEO, Dr. Cris Muyunda gave the presentation and highlighted the need for ACTESA to make sure that small holder farmers utilize the trade opportunities available in the region. He told the meeting that ACTESA had prioritized policy, capacity building, promotion of market services and commercialization of smallholders' agricultural productivity.

Dr. Muyunda highlighted ACTESA's progress and its endeavours through its programmes to enhance agricultural trade through initiatives like liaising with parliamentarians to change policies inhibiting trade, embarking on biotechnology as a tool to increase agricultural production and engaging with farmer associations and the private sector.

He said ACTESA would also work on interlinking commodity exchanges, agricultural insurance and seed harmonization among others.

At the end of the presentation, Dr. Julie Howard, Executive Director of the Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty thanked Dr. Muyunda and pledged support to ACTESA.

### *ACTESA meets World Bank officials*

On May 4, 2010 the ACTESA team met with World Bank Sector Manager, Agricultural and Rural development, African Region, Dr. Karen Brooks. Others were Dr. Josef Leoning and Dr. Gbemisola Oseni.

Dr. Muyunda discussed various issues including regional biotech guidelines, African Agricultural Markets Programme (AAMP) expansion and agricultural finance.

Dr. Muyunda further informed the meeting about the major role of ACTESA as a vehicle to coordinate the donor community.

Dr. Brooks commended ACTESA on its work and recommended that biotechnology issues should be included in the agenda of the upcoming journalist meeting in Tanzania.

She assured the team that the World Bank was willing to support ACTESA on its biotechnology agenda and requested the Agency to quickly undergo an assessment of how many countries in the region are willing to go ahead with the biotech agenda.





Meeting with USDA



Meeting with USTR



Meeting with IFPRI



Presentation at Partnership  
to Cut Hunger and Poverty



Meeting with USAID



Presentation at Partnership  
to Cut Hunger and Poverty



Meeting with World Bank